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Haleon's Tess Player: Digital Self-Care Can Reduce Health Inequality And Raise Productivity

by David Ridley

Haleon's partnership with Microsoft to include 1,500 of the former's products in the latter's Seeing AI application – which reads aloud information on packs for the visually impaired – is an example of how digitalization can help to make healthcare more inclusive, according to vice president and global head of healthcare professionals and health influencer marketing Tess Player.

People living in countries with high health inclusivity scores tend to live well for longer, making them more productive, reported Haleon as part of its recently published Health Inclusivity Index.

Countries with the highest overall scores, such as France, Germany, Sweden and the UK, provide people with tools to self-care effectively and responsibly, the Index explained, pointing to a key role not just for governments but also for consumer health companies.

Haleon has been investing to support health inclusivity, such as through its Actions to Breathe Cleaner and related schools program in the UK, which, via its Otrivine nasal spray brand, educated children about air pollution and how to avoid it. (Also see "*GSK CH Backs 'Generation Change' With UK 'Actions to Breathe Cleaner' Campaign*" - HBW Insight, 11 Nov, 2021.)

In the US, the firm also introduced easy-

GSK's Haleon Sets Its Sights On Improving Health Inclusivity

By Tom Gallen

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As GSK prepares to launch its standalone consumer health business, Haleon, Tess Player, global head of expert and influencer

to-open caps for its Voltaren pain relief gel and a $150,000 "Rest & Recovery Fund" for parents facing the financial and logistical challenges related to sick leave for unexpected mild illness.

Most recently, Haleon has collaborated with technology giant Microsoft to make 1,500 of its consumer health products more accessible for blind and visually impaired consumers via the latter's "Seeing AI" smartphone-based technology.

marketing, talks to HBW Insight about the new company's plans to improve health inclusivity globally and empower 50 million consumers per year to self-care by 2025.

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Huge Potential

For Haleon's Tess Player, this partnership is an exemplar of how to improve health inclusivity, and therefore also economic outcomes for individuals and societies.

Seeing AI also shows the "huge potential" that digital technology holds, Player argues, in particular artificial intelligence, for removing barriers to self-care, and generally expanding and extending the ways in which people can look after their own health.

"Haleon's Health Inclusivity Index, which we commissioned last year and developed in partnership with Economist Impact and UCL, gave us a better understanding of the biggest barriers to better everyday health on a global scale," Player told HBW Insight in an exclusive interview.

"One way digital health can improve some of the inequalities around access to healthcare is around increased tech-enabled care services," continued Player, who is vice president and global head of healthcare professionals and health influencer marketing for Haleon.

A study of 502 visually impaired people in the UK commissioned by Haleon showed that 93% of respondents said they don't feel health products are accessible enough, and almost one in five said they had taken the wrong dosage as they couldn't read the

Haleon's Nick Tate: Tech Partnerships Key To Unlocking Digital Consumer Health Future

By David Ridley

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"There's no one company, government, person or technology who is positioned to 'solve' the health of the world," notes Haleon's Nick Tate. Which is why OTC companies are partnering with tech firms large and small to create the next generation of consumer healthcare products and services. In the first part of an exclusive interview on the future of digital consumer...

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packaging effectively, she explained.

"People who are blind and those with low vision or low literacy can read labels through Seeing AI by scanning the barcode of Haleon products to hear important information such as the product name, ingredients, and dosage," she said. "Through the enhanced functionality that Seeing AI now offers, more people will be empowered to care for their own health independently by listening to the label information."

Vast Opportunity

In general, digital and mobile health offers "vast opportunities" for improving health equality, Player argued. "With the number of smartphone owners on the rise, more patients can use apps to monitor and manage personal health with things such as exercise and a healthy diet," she said. "This improves one's understanding of their health, allowing them to make informed decisions when given the opportunity to enact self-care on everyday health issues; ultimately meaning better access to health care."

However, it is important to note, Player pointed out, that digital health can also deepen health inequality. "One barrier that perpetuates health inequalities is digital exclusion," Player said, "which can be experienced by groups who have difficulty accessing online services. For example, people who live in rural areas may struggle to connect to digital services, and some groups struggle to afford devices and connectivity. Meanwhile, some people may not have the skillset or confidence to use digital technology."

This suggests an important, continuing role for healthcare professionals like pharmacists, who can "act as the bridge between clinicians and individuals, and help people to navigate the healthcare system," she said.

As Haleon demerged from parent GlaxoSmithKline last year, Player told HBW Insight that supporting community pharmacy will be central to the new standalone company's growth strategy. (Also see "*Why GSK Is Backing Community Pharmacy – Q&A With VP Tess Player*" - HBW Insight, 6 Dec, 2021.)

Support Needed

However, they needed more support, Player argued, as the firm announced a three-year global program that will provide the pharmacy profession with additional practical resources, mental health provisions and proposed policy changes.

Since then, Haleon has also launched a Centre for Human Sciences (HCHS) which will bring together the expertise of healthcare professionals and scientists to address the behavioral challenges impacting patients' everyday health. (Also see "*Haleon Invests In Healthcare Professionals With Centre for Human Sciences Launch*" - HBW Insight, 29 Sep, 2022.)

With regards to digital technology, tools like Seeing AI offer HCPs like pharmacists ways of providing more targeted support for consumers and patients, Player pointed out. Now, pharmacists and dentists can "have greater confidence in asking those who have sight loss or low literacy to read the labels on our products knowing that now they are able access the full label information."

"This will aid people's ability to be included in self-care and have greater autonomy and confidence in managing their own health," she said.

Digital health in general points to ways of extending self-care to the management of specific chronic diseases, she added, particularly wearable devices such as digital hearing aids and blood pressure monitors.

"AI enabled digital health applications can help overcome some of the inequalities of access to health care today, but it can never be in the absence of healthcare professionals," Player concluded. "Rather, it facilitates an optimal partnership between HCPs, the tech and pharma industry and patients, as they can more seamlessly work together to achieve better health outcomes, for all."